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SUBJECT: ARMENIA SAYS NO TO PALESTINIAN GUANTANAMO DETAINEE

REF: STATE 106853

Classified By: A/DCM Stephen Banks, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (S) Poloff met with Dziunik Aghajanian October 17 to deliver reftel demarche and solicit Armenia's interest in resettling to Armenia the Palestinian Guantanamo detainee Asim M. Al-Aasmi. Aghajanian said Armenia is unable to resettle such cases.

¶2. (S) Aghajanian said Armenia's refusal in such cases had both political and administrative motives. First, Armenia has become very sensitive in the post-9/11 world to the welfare of Armenian minority communities residing in the Middle East, as Christian minorities in majority Muslim societies. Accordingly, the GOAM avoids actions that could potentially add to the threats that Diaspora Armenians already face. For this reason, Armenia cannot accept the Palestinian detainee in question. Armenia's official policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict is neutrality, added Aghajanian, which is another reason Armenia would not want to be viewed as taking sides in this particular case.

¶3. (S) Armenia is also very reluctant to resettle any refugees in light of the administrative burden that resettlement imposes on Armenia's already strained national resources. Aghajanian said that Armenia already has its hands full resettling Armenian refugees from Iraq, which is taxing the GOAM's national budget. In addition, the resettlement of one individual, either refugee or asylee, is usually just the door-opener to follow-to-join family members. Aghajanian said Armenia simply cannot cope with any additional cases that could lead down this path.

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